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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, December 6, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "The Christmas Fruit Cake." From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D.A.

Bulletin available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

--ooOoo--

Such a pitiful letter I received the other day. From a man who wants his wife to make a fruit cake for Christmas. Although it's against my principles to read my private correspondence aloud, I must share with you this pathetic letter:

"Dear Aunt Sammy: I have heard lots of good things about your recipes (ah -- a good beginning -- he knows the value of flattery) -- and I wonder if you could prevail upon my wife to make a fruit cake for Christmas. Now my wife is a very good woman, but she does not understand me. (Dear me -- another man who is misunderstood!) Every year since we've been married, I've pleaded with her to make a good old-fashioned fruit cake for Christmas -- like those my mother used to make -- full of fruit and nuts. I think my mother used cider in her cake. Anyway, it was the best thing about Christmas, so far as I was concerned. Now, Aunt Sammy, my wife is very fond of your recipes, and she likes to write them down, and try them out. If you can spare the time to broadcast a recipe for Fruit Cake, on Thursday, the 6th of December, I'll see that my wife is listening-in. -- From one of your well-wishers."

After receiving a letter like that, how could I refuse to devote a whole program to the Christmas Fruit Cake? I couldn't, unless I had a heart of stone.

So -- gather 'round -- with pencils, and lots of paper, and we shall concentrate on a Fruit Cake. This recipe calls for sixteen ingredients. It makes between 5 and 6 pounds of cake. Before I begin reading ingredients, you'd better lock the front and back doors, muffle the telephone, and tell Aunt Jane to take the baby out for a ride. The baby needs fresh air, anyway.

Everybody ready now, for the Christmas Fruit cake, with its sixteen ingredients, including fruit, nuts, and cider:

1 pound raisins	1/2 cup tart jelly
1 pound currants	1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 pound citron	1/2 teaspoon soda
1/2 pound butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup chopped nuts	1 cup molasses
4 cups flour	5 eggs
1 cup sugar	1 tablespoon cinnamon, and
1/2 cup cider	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Let's check the ingredients, very carefully: (Repeat)

There now, that's done.

Before we can mix the fruit cake, we must prepare all the fruit. The fruit must be thoroughly picked over, carefully washed and dried. It takes some time to do this, but it pays. Our goal is a perfect fruit cake and we can't have a perfect fruit cake, unless the fruit is carefully prepared. Cut the citron into very small pieces.

(Read very slowly) Now, you may take your pencils again, and I'll tell you how to mix the cake. First, cream the butter and sugar. Then, separate the eggs. Add the yolks of the eggs to the butter and sugar. Next, add the liquid ingredients -- that is, the cider, the jelly, the sour cream, and the molasses. Now, divide the flour into two portions. With one-half of the flour mix the salt, the soda, and the spices. To the other half of the flour add the fruit and nuts. Next, add the dry ingredients -- that is, the flour, salt, soda and spices -- gradually, to the liquid ingredients. Then add the floured fruit and nuts, and last, the beaten whites of the eggs. Just a word about the fruit. If it is well covered with flour, it will be scattered through the cake, as it should be, instead of settling to the bottom.

That concludes the method of mixing the cake. You will note that the recipe calls for a half cup of tart jelly. Grape or currant jelly will do nicely. If you have some jelly which is not firm enough to use on the table, you might use it for this cake. And be sure to select a molasses which has a good sweet flavor.

If you want a very rich fruit cake, one which ^{is} more fruity, and more nutty, I mean one which has more nuts in it -- you can vary this recipe. Increase the raisins to one and one-half pounds, and add another cup of nuts. Or, you can use one pound of raisins, as in the original recipe, and add one cup of chopped candied cherries, candied pineapple, dates, or dried figs, and one extra cup of chopped nuts. Good nuts to use in a fruit cake are pecans, English walnuts, blanched almonds, and hickory nuts.

Bake the cake in a tube pan -- that is, an angel food pan -- which allows the heat to come up through the center. Choose a pan that will make the dough at least 3-1/2 to 4 inches deep, in the pan. The cake will take longer to bake, than in a shallow pan, but it will not dry out so much.



Be sure to line the pan with a well-greased paper. Sometimes small pieces of the fruit get next to the sides of the pan, and will stick and burn, unless there is a greased paper lining.

Have I told you everything you want to know about a fruit cake? Let's see. I believe I forgot to tell you to bake the cake in a slow oven, 275 to 300 degrees Fahrenheit, if you have a thermometer. The cake will be done in from 3 to 4 hours. Test the cake in the good old-fashioned manner - by using a clean straw, or a toothpick. If the toothpick comes out dry, the cake is done.

When this cake is done, and cold, wrap it in a waxed paper, or parchment paper, and put it in a tightly covered tin box, or jar. Then it will keep until Christmas -- and for weeks afterward, if the family gives it a chance. Look at the cake, once in a while, to see that no mold is starting. You can keep the fruit cake moist, by putting half an apple in with it, or a piece of cheesecloth, saturated with cider.

This cake is delicious without a frosting. However, if you want a frosting, don't put it on until just before Christmas. Otherwise, the frosting will discolor and crack.

Any questions about the Fruit Cake? Ah, there's one question. A listener wants to know whether this fruit cake could be used as a Christmas gift. I should say so! You might double the recipe I have just given you and make two cakes. However, if you double the recipe, bake the cake in two pans. It is better to take fruit cakes in medium-sized loaves than in large loaves. Get one of the attractive tin boxes, and bake your gift cake so that it will fit this box. I hope your cake will be just as good as the one the Recipe Lady made. If you think it's even better -- well, of course I can't judge that, without sampling it.

Tomorrow: "Toys to Fit the Child." Program will include menu and recipes.

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